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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
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SUBJECT: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IMPASSE LIKELY SOLVED

REF: KINSHASA 459

Classified By: PolCouns MSanderson, reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (C) The question of who should preside over the National Assembly, Olivier Kamitatu or Thomas Luhaka, may have been resolved. The two met March 28 in a discussion facilitated by President Kabila's Ambassador-at-Large Antoine Ghonda, and they reached an agreement on key issues underpinning Kamitatu's reluctance to step down (ref). One of these concerns, the possible ramifications for other parliamentarians from all the transitional government components who also have been identified as no longer belonging to the component whose seat they occupy and who should therefore, in theory, be removed, will be dealt with by the Political and Judicial Committee (PAJ) which will examine each allegation on a case-by-case basis. This lengthy process could very well continue until Parliament is dissolved for the elections.

¶2. (C) Luhaka told PolCouns that Kamitatu will announce his resignation the afternoon of March 31, which will allow Luhaka and the first Vice President of the Assembly time to prepare and distribute to Assembly members the official documents announcing Luhaka's installation. If all goes well, the Assembly will then resume its normal session April 3 with Luhaka presiding and legislative business will resume.

3.(C) Comment: This agreement was made possible in part by battle fatigue on the part of all concerned, including the always combative Bemba. Luhaka apparently was able to persuade Bemba that he had a chance to "take the high road" with the public by acceding to the agreement. As for Kamitatu, he had indicated that he was ready to put this incident behind him and concentrate on his electoral campaign, but needed a face-saving exit. Luhaka, a young politician eager to make a name for himself, is pleased to have the chance to helm the Assembly, which of course will greatly enhance his national recognition and provide a boost for his electoral campaign. His tenure will be brief, however, as the Assembly likely will be dismissed in coming weeks to enable members to conduct their electoral campaigns in their home districts. End comment.

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